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ABSTRACT

In this document, tables and charts illustrate the present state of attainment of education in the U.S. and the changing nature of choices people are making. The document attempts to show the demographic data that proves or disproves the necessity of nontraditional study and the relationship of nontraditional study to the fate of higher education in general. Data is used to answer the questions: to what extent is there a population available with sufficient education to benefit from either traditional or nontraditional study; will high school graduates who are no longer choosing to attend college change their minds later in their lives; would widespread availability of alternative forms of education restore the upward trend in college attendence; are we leveling off to a "natural" rate of college attendance; what are future trends in education? Data seem to support the view that in the future more older people will go to school. Tables include information on: number of high school graduates; number and type of people attending college; years of college completed; enrollment changes and trends; comparisons of working and school populations; and enrollment projections. (Author/KE)

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DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSES RELATED TO NON-TRADITIONAL STUDY: WHAT DO THE DATA SHOW US?

David A. Trivett*

Good afternoon. It is my pleasure to be here. My presence here is in part through the cooperation of my employer, the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education, operated by George Washington University for the National Institute of Education. As you may be aware, most of our work at the ERIC clearinghouses is synthetic scholarship, by which I mean that we try to assemble and make available to the broadest possible audience the research and stimulative ideas of others. This paper is no exception and I hope you will pursue the sources of my ideas and data even further.

The process by which papers, addresses, and speakers are chosen and selected for this form of assembly amuses me. When the letter arrived from the conference organizers providing me the title of this paper, I proudly took it home to show it to my wife. Her reaction, when she was shown the title "Demographic Analyses Related to Non-Traditional Study: What do the Data Show Us?" was an astonished "Can you do that?"

I have two reasons for telling this anecdote. One, I hope you haven't been turned off by the title. I've had fun scrounging for the data and think there is meaning to them. Second, to begin to make a point I will return to, what the data are in the future, and what they mean now are questions that you are in the best position to answer.

*Prepared for conference "Non-Traditional Study: Threat, Promise or Necessity," Drake University, May 20, 1975.

Many demographic and educational "givens" of the past 25 years are now no longer certainties. Many long range trends are apparently turning around. Not only are the internal characteristics of our society seemingly changing--such as a decline in birth rate and desired family size--but also we face continued uncertainty from outside our culture, doubts about the effects of technology, environmental concerns, and a puzzling economic future.

No one born in the Twentieth Century in the U.S. has known many years of pure tranquility. However, for those of us in education, the years of the recent past and immediate future are in maximum flux. For this reason, I would like to briefly review a time when education in the U.S. once before experienced massive change. I refer to the period during and after World War II and the creation and effects of the G.I.Bill. My discussion is based on a paper by Keith Olson (1968). My purpose is to warn that the prediction of education events is a risky business.

President Franklin Roosevelt began planning to offer benefits for the post-war education of veterans as early as 1942. The G.I. Bill was signed into law in June 1944. According to Olson, Roosevelt's motives included gratitude, politics, the desire to replenish educated manpower, and an attempt to reduce expected unemployment. Political support for the Act came in good measure from such organizations as the American Legion, organizations that sought to restore opportunity lost by the

veterans during the War. A strange mixture of gratitude with fear of unemployment and re-adjustment problems also motivated Congress.

In any case, the impact of the G.I. Bill was pronounced. Access to higher education was significantly extended. It became evident that many more individuals could profit (mentally) from higher education than had been though so previously. Public higher education surged into prominence. The veteran students made higher education familiar with married students, high enrollments, and needed flexibility in practice. Also, the success of the G.I. Bill paved the way for other forms of federal aid to education. Finally, the influx of veterans led to such examinations of the purposes, methods and facilities of higher education as the Truman Commission report.

The point Olson makes that is relevant to our discussion is that few of the effects of the G.I. Bill were anticipated or dreamed of as the legislation was shaped. For example, newspapers and magazines editorially ignored the Act. Educators underestimated veteran interest in education and some feared that hordes of unprepared students might ruin higher education. Other educators welcomed the veterans but regarded them as a peculiar challenge. Regarding this point, Olson concludes that veterans were in fact serious students who generally did better than their non-veteran peers. Of particular salience to us, the enrollment expectations also proved to be in error. Army estimates were that at most seven or eight percent of the veterans might participate in all forms of post-war education.

In fact, 14.3 percent used their benefits for college level study alone.

I will return later to the lesson of the G.I. Bill, but I find four points to be of particular importance. The effect of the G.I. Bill was from a pragmatic, caused change in the state of higher education. Large numbers of individuals participated successfully in a new, different educational experience. Prognosticators substantially misjudged the effect of the Act on higher education. The experience of the veterans, society, and higher education was inter-active; all three changed as a consequence.

Now, bearing in mind all of the reservations about prognostication implicit in that story, what are some demographic data that portend the threat, promise or necessity of non-traditional study?

One question which might well be raised is the extent to which non-traditional study is tied to the fate of higher education in general. The present state and prognosis for higher education is cloudy. A recent report from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (More Than Survival 1975) provides a succinct description of the problems facing traditional higher education. From 1870 to 1970 there was steady, certain growth. Whereas enrollments doubled in the sixties, zero growth is likely now. As a consequence, demand for new faculty will fall. Since perhaps two-thirds of faculty now are tenured, few new faculty positions will open. Government

money into higher education is decreasing or static. During the sixties, new colleges opened at the rate of one per week; now, closings, mergers, and private to public conversions have obliterated that phenomena. According to the Council, demographic patterns, changing priorities, and shifting demands for college educated labor will cause a decline in the long term growth of American higher education. These are somber words.

So, let us look at a series of tables and charts that illustrate the present state of attainment of education in the U.S. and the changing nature of the choices people are making about society and education. Incidentally, these graphics are either derived from or lifted directly from widely available Census Bureau or Office of Education statistical works. I have tried to simplify and select the aspects most relevant to non-traditional study and I have hand drawn most of the tables for what I hope will be maximum visibility.

One question we can begin with is "To what extent is there a populace available with sufficient education to benefit from either traditional or non-traditional study in higher education?" A conservative indicator is the availability of high school graduates. Generally, high school graduation rates have increased from a relatively low level at the beginning of the Twentieth Century to a rate around 75 percent of the 17 year old populace in the last few years. Looking at Table 1, we can see that at least half of the under-fifty population can be expected to be high school graduates. Estimating, for those now in their

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

thirties close to 65 percent are high school graduates. Three-quarters of the populace in their twenties are likely to have a diploma (Grant and Lind 1975, p.54). For the age group 25-34, the proportion of the white male population with a high school diploma has increased from 36 percent in 1940 to 82 percent in 1974 (Bureau of the Census 1974b, p. 1). For black males, this figure has increased from 8.9 percent to 67 percent. For white females 41 percent had four or more years of high school in 1940 and 81 percent in 1974; for black females the increase was from 12 percent in 1940 to 64 percent in 1974.

Now, for traditional higher education, a more important figure has been the proportion of high school graduates planning to go to college, an indicator of how many freshmen will be knocking on college doors in September. College-going plans of high school seniors reported in the Current Population Reports of the Census Bureau have been quite accurate. These reports are based on monthly update surveys of a statistical sample of the U.S. population. Therefore, the October 1973 plans, reported in October 1974, have raised eyebrows. The Census Bureau (1974a, pp. 1-2) reports that there has been a consistent decline in the college going plans of seniors for the past four years. Percentage wise, in 1972 forty-five percent of the seniors planned to attend college; in 1973 forty-two percent. The percentage of students planning to attend trade or vocational school held steady. For black students, the "planning to attend

college" figure dropped from 44 to 38 percent.

Now I should mention that Garland Parker implies that enrollment figures this past fall (1974) suggest that this reversal has itself been reversed; only time will tell (Parker 1975, pp. 9-10). However, if the rate of college-going seniors does continue to decline, perhaps reflecting a basic change in youth values, the providors of education in the lockstep sequence will have proportionately fewer new customers out of each crop of high school seniors.

More insight on this development can be acquired by examining data on the proportion of high school graduates who complete one year or more of college. Glossing over some marked racial differences, Table 2 shows us the changes in the percentage of high school graduates 20 and 21 years old who have completed one year of college or more from 1940 to 1974.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

I think we can observe that for both men and women the proportion completing at least one year of college almost doubled from 1940 to the peak years. There has been a long term rise in attainment for both men and women. However, we can not ignore the close to 10 percentage point drop for males from 1968 to 1974 (Bureau of the Census 1974b).

So, as we can see, the rate of high school graduation provides traditional and non-traditional education with a populace that has accomplished the usual preliminary educational minimum step. Yet, the proportion of male students with new high school

diplomas intending to or actually acquiring at least a year of college is decreasing. For non-traditional study, the question may be whether these high school graduates who are no longer choosing to attend college will change their minds later on in their lives? Would widespread availability of alternative forms of education restore the upward trend? Do these figures mean we have pushed the wrong product in the past? Or, are we levelling off to a "natural" rate of college attendance?

Before considering some of the changes in the characteristics of the current college student population, and then some expected changes in the population of the U.S. that will bear on higher education, we would be remiss not to look at the dimensions of enrollment in higher education now.

In fall of 1974 an estimated 8.9 million individuals were expected to enroll in degree credit programs in colleges and universities in the U.S. (Grant and Lind 1975, p. 1). This represented an increase of 4.5 percent over the 8.5 million enrolled the previous year. Parker provides us figures for actual enrollment at 1,457 four-year or related institutions and he found an actual increase in those schools of 3.7 percent (Parker 1975, p.2). In short, there were a large number of students enrolled in higher education in 1974 and increases in enrollments were stronger than the fractional increases or even decreases experienced in the immediate past years.

Now, glancing at Chart 1, we can see the percentage of the population 25 to 29 who have acquired four or more years of

CHART 1 ABOUT HERE

college from 1960 to 1974. As you would expect, the lines are generally upward. But, notice the reversals for non-whites occurring from 1972 onward. It is also noteworthy to me that the percentage of white and non-white individuals in that age group that have been to college for four years is not really large. The subpopulation of those beginning their productive economic lives is hardly saturated with college graduates.

When we begin to look at the nature of the population of students in higher education now, some striking changes are evident. First let us consider changes in the sexual make up of the population of students.

As you will recall, the proportion of women 20 or 21 with at least a year of college has shown a long term increase. However, particularly startling is the fact that the number of women college students increased by 30 percent from 1970 to 1974; the number of men in college increased in that period by only 12 percent (Bureau of the Census 1975b, pp. 1-2).

Much of the increase in college enrollment numbers of the past four years can be attributed to higher enrollments by women. If this long term trend continues, the proportion of women and men in college will even out. The significance of this trend arises from the fact that higher proportions of women finish high school than do men, but higher proportions of men than women attend and complete college.

Looking at Chart 2, we can see that roughly the same percentage of white men and women have not completed high

CHART 2 ABOUT HERE

school. (These are men and women ages 25 to 34 in 1974). Some 47 percent of the women completed high school and 38 percent of the men. However, higher proportions of men tried college and completed four years (Bureau of the Census 1974b, p.2).

The progress women have made at the B.A. and Master's level can be seen in Chart 3 which illustrates degrees received by women per 100 received by males, beginning 1970 and projected to 1977-78. Thus, roughly 82 Bachelor's degrees were earned by women for every 100 earned by men in 1974. No comment is necessary about the "Doctor's" and "First Professional" lines.

CHART 3 ABOUT HERE

Some very startling developments are apparent when we look at changes in the college population on the basis of sex and age categories.

First, let's look at percent changes in college enrollment for both sexes in selected age categories from 1970 to 1974 (Table 3). Notice that for age groups 18 and 19 there was very slight increase in the enrollment while for ages 30-34 the increase in four years was 75 percent. When we look at figures for men,

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

we notice that the number of older men enrolled also increased, especially in comparison with the decline in enrollment for 18 and 19 year-old males. Then, turning to the women, we see that the seven percent increase in enrollment for 18 and 19 year-olds was overwhelmed by an increase of 108 percent for the

25 to 29 year-old women. Incidentally, while not on this table, the one year increase from 1973 to 1974 in enrollment for those of both sexes 35 and older was around 30 percent (Bureau of the Census 1975b, pp. 1-2; 5).

Chart 4 dramatically portrays the nature of these enrollment changes as they occurred from 1970 to 1973.

CHART 4 ABOUT HERE

There is one more demonstrated change in the make up of the current college enrollment that merits notice. College students in 1974 were more likely to be attending on a part time basis. During the 60's as high as 79 percent of students attended full time. In 1974 this percentage had dropped to 72, prompted by a 50 percent increase in part time enrollment and 10 percent increase in full time enrollments (Bureau of the Census 1975b, p.2). One explanation that can be offered for this shift is the increase in older students. With a greater proportion of 25 to 34 year-olds enrolled, the part time enrollment is bound to increase. Glancing at Table 4, we can see that full time enrollment hit a peak in 1966 and has been moving downwards since 1970.

TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

Before looking at predictions for the future, let's review the accomplishments and changes that have occurred to this point. In recent years roughly 75 percent of the population at age 17 has acquired a high school diploma. The proportion of high school seniors, particularly males, choosing to continue directly

in college is apparently dropping. This is an important figure to watch. Actual college enrollments have increased slightly in the past years with a healthy increase this past fall. The nature and character of students enrolled is definitely changing. Proportionately more women are enrolling. Proportionately more older people are enrolling. And more students are enrolling on a part time basis.

When we turn to prediction for the immediate future, it appears very likely that some of these trends must continue. Looking at Table 5, we can see that the estimated population of 18-21 year-olds will peak in 1978-79 then drop back to 15 million by 1985. But the population group of those 22 to 64 years of age continues to increase (Condition of Education 1975, p. 132).

TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

There are other ways of looking at these realities from the post World War II baby boom. Chart 5 shows us the changing ratios of working age persons, those 22 to 64, to traditional student age persons. Observe that this ratio will increase from a little over 1.5 to 1 in 1975 to over 2 to 1 by 1985 (p. 16).

CHART 5 ABOUT HERE

Although this suggests that more money will be available to support education for consumption by the traditional age students, it also demonstrates a changing ratio of educational need, shifting to the older and employed group from the traditional student age group.

The figures we have looked at so far have been based primarily on past and present data representing accomplished facts and apparent trends or changes. As I have suggested, certain changes in age composition of the population are almost certainties, barring some calamity. However, the long term future predictions for the population are now subject to question because of changes in behavior and reported plans. A few highlights pertaining to birth rate will illustrate this point. The crude birth rate in 1974 and 1973 was the lowest in American history. The fertility rate in 1974 also hit a new low of about 1.86 children per woman. A rate of 2.1 children is required to replenish the population unless there is significant immigration. Women expect to have fewer children than they have expected in previous years, the number of marriages is down slightly, and marriages are occurring later in life. These types of changes make it difficult to predict the composition of the future population.

At the present time, the 15 to 19 and 10 to 14 age groups are the largest subgroups of the population. The largest increase in population in 1974 occurred in the 25 to 34 age group, an 18.4 percent increase. As a proportion of the population the under 18 group decreased (Bureau of the Census 1975b, pp. 1-3; 9-10).

The consequence of these changes is that projections of enrollments and patterns of enrollment in higher education are more difficult than ever. There are, in fact, wide differences

in long term enrollment predictions and books are being written on the problem of prediction itself. One optimistic prediction is offered by Leslie and Miller. They argue that higher education is in a state of dynamic equilibrium and open interaction with its environment. Their expectations are that higher education, in some form, will restore growth to itself by corrections, changes, and adaptations. The consequence will be long term growth in the form of alternating periods of growth and slowdown (Leslie and Miller 1974).

We owe it to ourselves to look at the fairly conservative enrollment predictions made by the Office of Education. Their projections are based on what has happened in the past along with expected changes in the population in the future. The most recent projections I had access to were the projection to 1982-83 published in 1974 (Frankel and Beamer 1974). Referring to Table 6, we can see that their predictions for total enrollment growth show total enrollment peaking in 1980 and then declining. Notice in particular that the non-degree credit share

TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

of the total enrollment will be increasing. Notice also the difference in growth between the periods 1962-1972 and 1972-1982. In a nutshell, most of the hollering is about that change in enrollment growth, a decline in growth we have to live with. The boxed figures in Table 6 are from projections based on even more pessimistic assumption about rate of enrollment growth. We can

see that with these assumptions first-time enrollments, that is new freshmen, will peak in 1975 and begin to decline immediately.

One remaining set of projections that we should be aware of if that set pertaining to occupational demand for college graduates. For a variety of reasons, college graduates in the past have had an advantage in finding jobs. And, looking ahead from 1972 to 1985, roughly 25 percent of all job openings are expected to require college graduates. However, if previous trends hold up, the available supply of college graduates will exceed the expected demand by some 800,000. All of the uncertainties in the economy, as well as educational choices made by the population affect that figure. Nevertheless, the "sure way to get a job" rationale for attending college, so good up to the recent past, will be dampened as the effect of that surplus seeps into the consciousness of potential college enrollees (Occupational Manpower and Training Needs 1974, p. 26).

I think that we have seen ample evidence of the demographic changes that are and will be affecting higher education. The question remains "What is the meaning for non-traditional study?"

It is my conviction that those offering non-traditional study in its various forms will have to make a "fight or flight" decision. The flux, the change, the worry that is in the air leaves a vacuum. My experience in the world of higher education bureaucracies suggests that this is the time for non-traditional study to move. Remember the G.I. Bill. It was a pragmatic, political move that could have taken other forms given the motives

of its supporters.

In my judgment, the demographic changes that are occurring represent opportunity for non-traditional study. Older people, women, those who are working, those who rejected a "knee-jerk" decision to go to college, minority group members, all are out there in growing numbers. But if those working in non-traditional study choose to fight, to offer programs, to expand and grow, there are a series of questions to ponder.

What are the educational interests of the new groups of students? Can you identify their developmental needs and respond? Will you sell the same old stuff but in different packages? Do you know the challenging questions raised by what adults say they are interested in learning (Carp, Peterson and Roelfs 1974). What methods, locations, techniques, strategies attract students who have reached different stages in their personal lives and careers? Do you have the courage to use marketing concepts as integral parts of your non-traditional programs? Are you focusing on external realities or on internal wishes? (Fram 1974).

I believe that demographic changes represent opportunity for non-traditional study. But like the G.I. Bill experience, an attempt to portray the potential and estimate the meaning would probably result in an under-estimate of that opportunity. Those of you who turn the cranks will really determine the meaning.

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TABLE 1

NUMBER OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES PER 100 17 YEAR OLDS IN SELECTED YEARS

APPROXIMATE AGE NOW	H.S. GRADUATION YEAR	NUMBER GRADUATED PER 100 17 YEARS OLD
72	1919-1920	16.8
62	1929-1930	29.0
52	1939-1940	50.8
42	1949-1950	59.0
32	1959-1960	65.1
22	1969-1970	75.7
20	1971-1972	76.0
19	1972-1973	75.5

SOURCE: Derived from GRANT AND LIND 1975, p. 54.

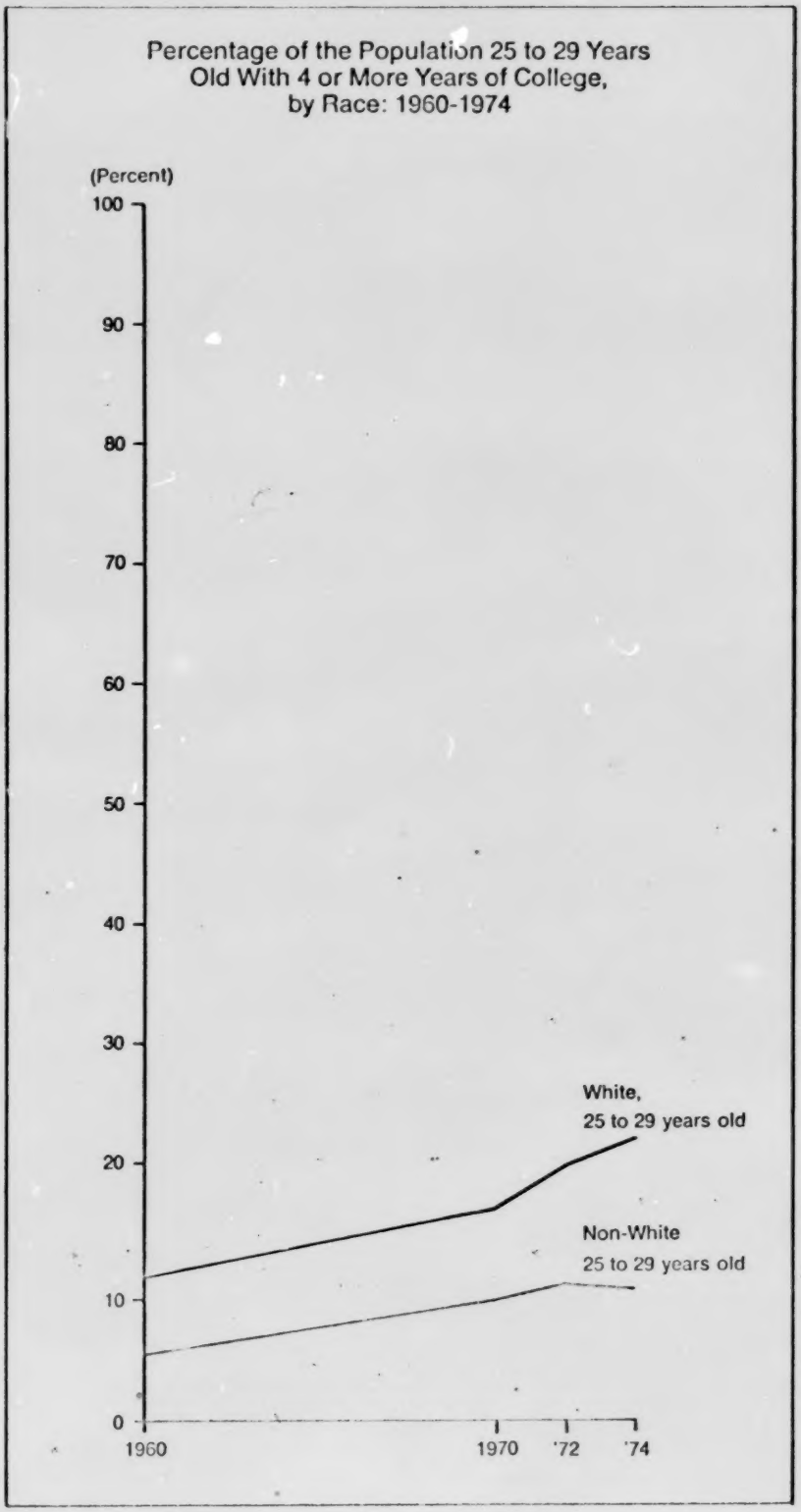
TABLE 2

PERCENT OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES 20 AND 21 YEARS OLD (ALL RACES) WHO HAVE COMPLETED ONE YEAR OF COLLEGE: 1940 TO 1974

YEAR	MALE	FEMALE
1974	49.5%	45.7%
1972	52.7	42.4
1971	56.2	46.4
1970	58.7	44.3
1969	57.6	41.5
1968	58.8	43.8
1960	41.8	33.6
1950	37.1	29.8
1940	30.3	24.4

SOURCE: BUREAU OF THE CENSUS 1974b, p.5.

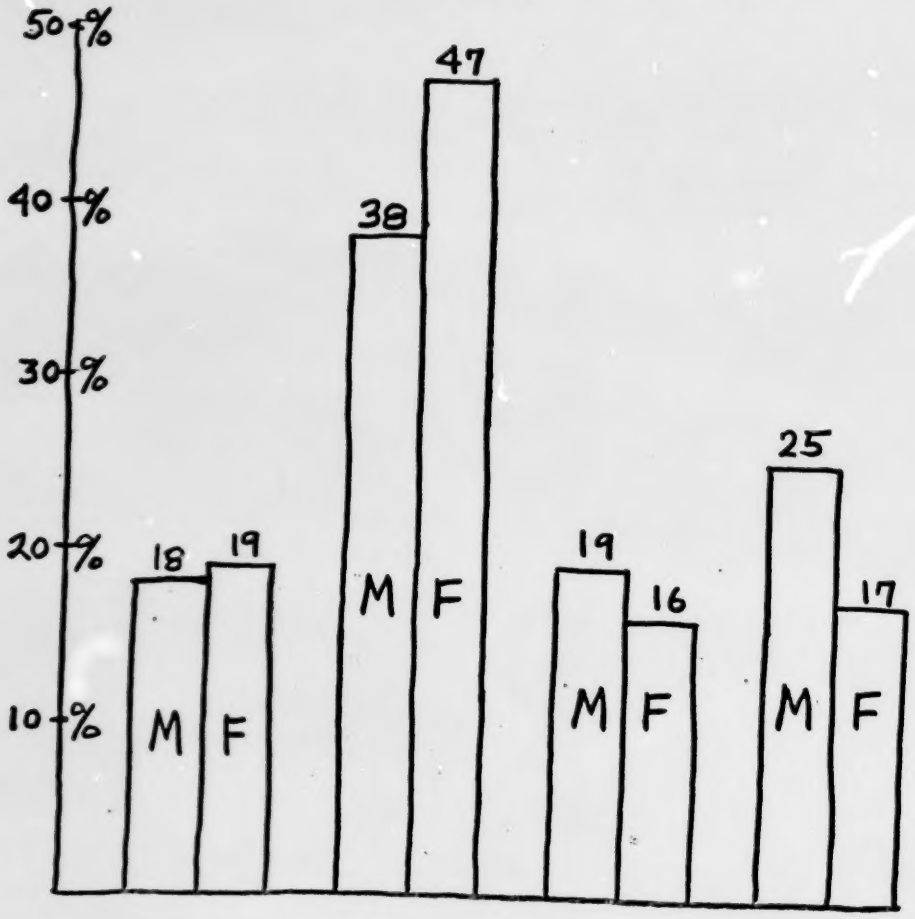
CHART 1



SOURCE: CONDITION OF EDUCATION 1975, p. 80.

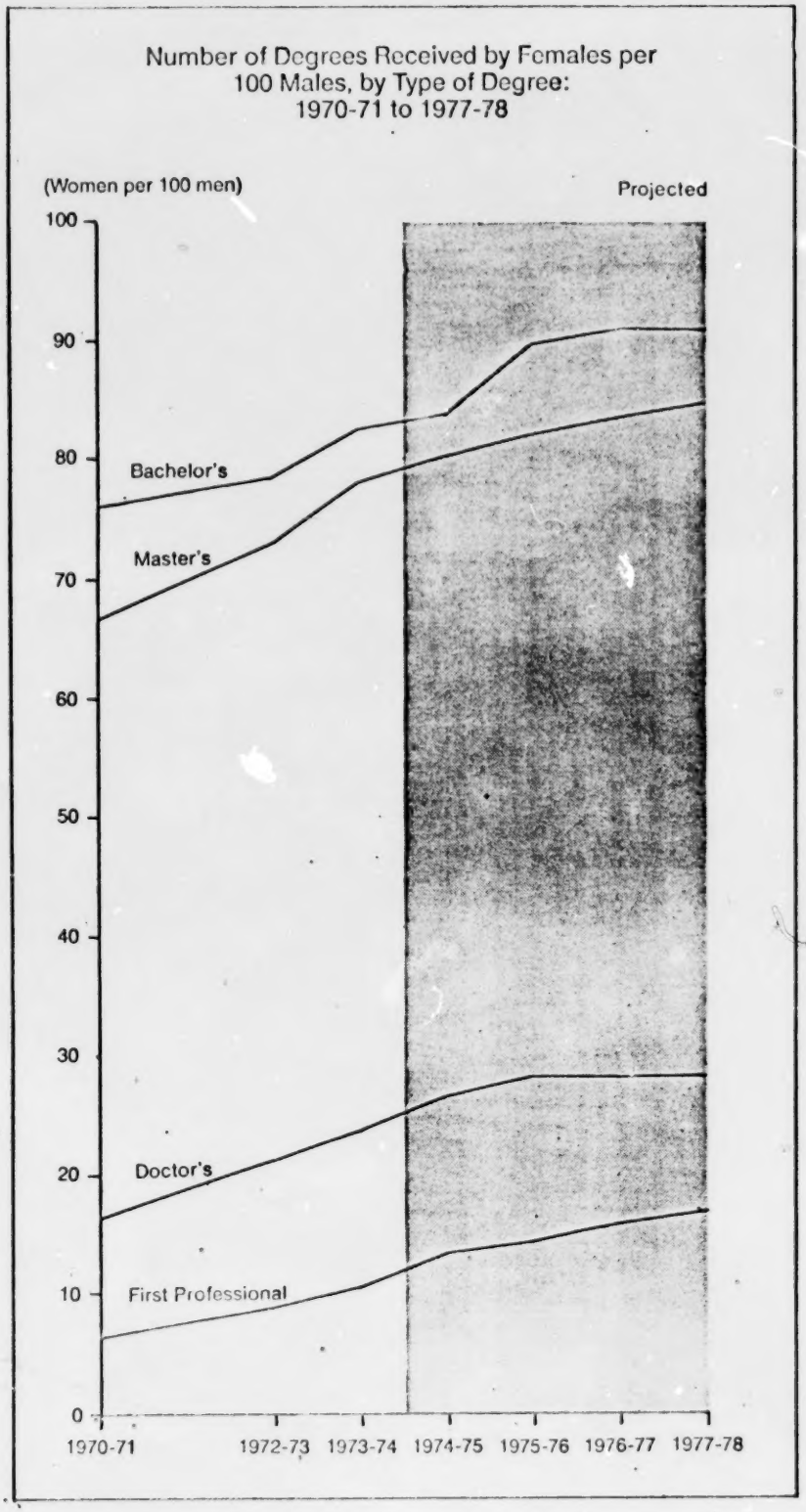
CHART 2

YEARS OF SCHOOL COMPLETED for WHITE MEN AND WOMEN, 25-34 IN 1974



SOURCE: BUREAU OF THE CENSUS 1974b, p. 2.

CHART 3



SOURCE: CONDITION OF EDUCATION 1975, p.83.

TABLE 3

PERCENT CHANGE IN COLLEGE ENROLLMENT OF THE POPULATION 16 YEARS AND OVER BY AGE AND SEX, OCTOBER 1970 TO OCT. 1974

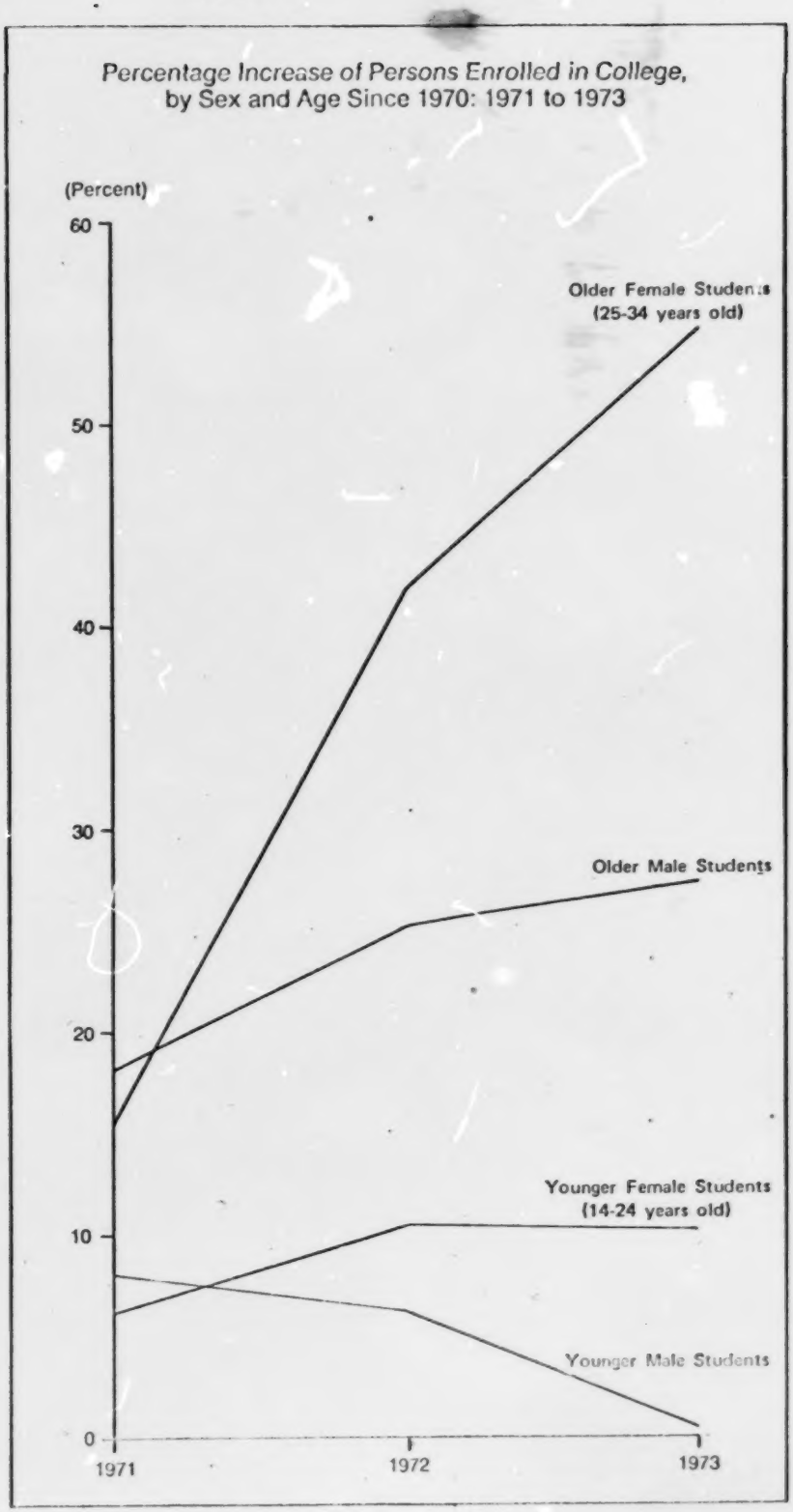
BOTH SEXES	CHANGE 1970 - 1974
16-17	16.9%
18-19	0.1
20-21	18.0
22-24	12.8
25-29	57.8
30-34	75.6

MALES	CHANGE 1970 - 1974
16-17	9.2
18-19	-6.2
20-21	11.4
22-24	4.5
25-29	39.0
30-34	64.1

FEMALES	CHANGE 1970 - 1974
16-17	24.6
18-19	7.0
20-21	27.4
22-24	29.2
25-29	108.2
30-34	94.8

SOURCE: BUREAU OF THE CENSUS 1975b, p.5.

CHART 4



SOURCE: CONDITION OF EDUCATION 1975, p. 108.

TABLE 4

FULL TIME COLLEGE ENROLLMENT PERCENTAGE OCTOBER 1964 TO OCTOBER 1974

YEAR	PERCENT FULL TIME ENROLLMENT
1964	76.6
1965	77.8
1966	79.7 ★
1967	77.7
1968	78.8
1969	78.1
1970	77.7
1971	76.7
1972	75.9
1973	74.4
1974	71.9

SOURCE: Derived from Bureau of Census 1975b, p. 3.

TABLE 5

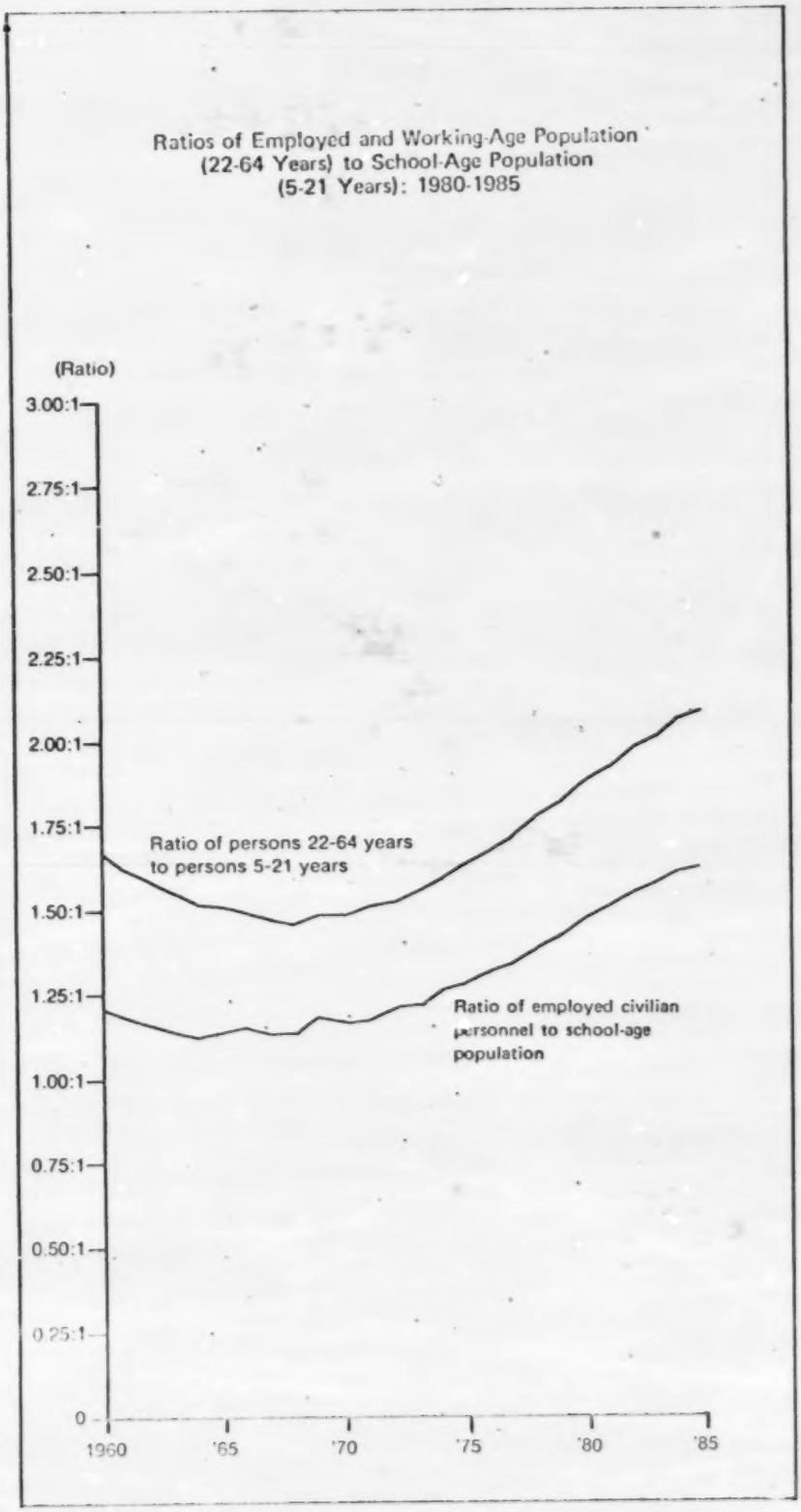
ESTIMATED POPULATION OF THE U.S. for SELECTED AGE GROUPS: 1975-1985

(IN MILLIONS)

YEAR	18-21	22-64
1975	16.3	108.6
1976	16.6	110.5
1977	16.7	112.4
1978	16.9	114.4
1979	16.9	116.4
1980	16.8	118.4
1981	16.7	120.4
1982	16.4	122.5
1983	16.1	124.4
1984	15.6	126.2
1985	15.0	127.9

SOURCE: CONDITION OF EDUCATION 1975, p.132.

CHART 5



SOURCE: CONDITION OF EDUCATION 1975, p. 16.

TABLE 6

"PAST AND PROJECTED ENROLLMENT IN ALL U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION BY DEGREE CREDIT STATUS 1962-1982

(IN MILLIONS)

YEAR	TOTAL ENROLLMENT	TOTAL DEGREE CREDIT ENR.	TOTAL NON-DEGREE CREDIT ENR.
1962	4.4	4.2	.2
1972	9.2	8.2	.95
1975	9.8	8.6	1.2
1980	10.5	9.1	1.4
1982	10.4	8.9	1.5

YEAR	TOTAL DEGREE CREDIT ENR.	TOTAL FIRST TIME DEGREE CREDIT ENR.
1962	4.2	1.0
1972	8.2	1.7
1975	8.5 ☆	1.8 ☆
1980	8.4	1.6
1982	8.0	1.5

SOURCE: FRANKEL AND BEAMER 1974, pp. 24, 160.